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Media Release

IWDA celebrates changes to AusAID Family Planning Guidelines

International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) welcomes changes to AusAID's Family Planning Guidelines. IWDA Executive Director, Jane Sloane, said today that these changes would save lives and ensure that women were supported with information and services to reduce the incidence of maternal deaths.

'We celebrate the changes made to AusAID's Family Planning Guidelines by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Stephen Smith, MP, as a change that will empower women to make safe choices in relation to family planning.

'We further welcome the commitment made by the Federal Government for up to \$15 million to go toward maternal and child health in Australia's Aid program.'

'Only 9% of the target for Millennium Development Goal 5, in reducing maternal deaths, has been reached to date and so there is an urgent need for increasing political will, resources and funding to address the increasing rate of maternal deaths across the globe. The Asia Pacific region, where the majority of AusAID funds are directed, has a dismal record in relation to maternal deaths. In places such as the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, the rate of maternal deaths continues to increase, it has not even been stabilised, let alone decreased.', Ms Sloane said.

Women and women's organisations around the world were last night celebrating the fact that Australia has followed the example set by President Obama in the US in overturning USAID family planning guidelines that impacted so tragically on women's lives.

Previously, under AusAID's guidelines, which were modelled on the USAID guidelines, no information could be provided about unsafe abortion and no service could be provided even in those countries where abortion is legal. During this period, AusAID funding for family planning was reduced by 84%.

This change to AusAID's family planning guidelines would save lives and recognises the right of women to access appropriate family planning information and services to support their health and wellbeing, and in turn those of their children and families.

For further information and interviews contact Jane Sloane Executive Director on 0412 310 133.